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The Clinton Herald

By Jason Nevel

CLINTON - A spokesman for U.S. Congressman Bruce Braley, D-Iowa, said Wednesday there are no plans to increase security or change the format of a series of town hall meetings being held throughout August and early September, including one each in Clinton and Maquoketa.

"There is always a potential for something to occur, but I would expect nothing less than a civil debate about the issues," said Jeff Giertz, Braley's spokesman.

Across the country, similar style meetings have erupted in heated debate. But the tone in Iowa has been more civil, according to news coverage from meetings held by U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, and U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa.

But actions by protesters in other states have begun to reach the criminal level.

Following a town hall meeting in Georgia, David Scott, a north-central Georgia Democrat, was greeted with a swastika painted on a sign outside of his office earlier this week. He reportedly received several offensive faxes and letters, including some with death threats and racial abuse.

Giertz said it would not surprise him if people arrived at the town hall meetings to intentionally disrupt them but did not expect the events to get out of control.

"People are very passionate about this issue and there are some right-wing groups that are organizing people to show up at town halls and be disruptive," he said.

The town hall meetings are designed to seek constituents' input on health care reform legislation that is pending in Congress. According to Giertz, Braley will discuss the House health care reform bill, listen to constituents' concerns and take questions.